

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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PBSUCCESS/RBAT

9 MAY 1954

Chief of Station, Guatemala

LINCOLN

INFO: PBSUCCESS, Headquarters

Biographic
Guillermo GRIFFEL

HGG-A-998 - F/1-f

1. Re note in paragraph 1, page 2, of the memorandum attached to the reference: "... Senor GRIFFEL had for some time acted as procurer for ex-President AREVALO and now, possibly, for President ARBENZ."
2. The information quoted above could be put to considerable propaganda use, either against AREVALO or -- preferably -- against ARBENZ himself. However, before deciding whether to use it or what specifically to do with the information quoted, we would like you to provide us with additional information on that subject.
3. In particular we would appreciate your comments as to what you consider would be the effect of implicating Sr. GRIFFEL in any story we intend to publish. Furthermore, we would like to receive any identities of the ladies who were actually procured (pictures if possible), the dates, places, and other circumstances of their association with either ARBENZ or AREVALO, and any pertinent details which you might be able to dig out.
4. Do not let the above requirements detract you from any major operations underway: but if the request can be filled without too great additional effort it might conceivably add an effective angle to our anti-personnel campaign.

JERRY G. FURBER

EFL/sgw

6 May 1954

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DISPATCH NO. ~~EGG-A-998~~

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CLASSIFICATION

MAY 4 1954

TO : LINCOLN

DATE: _____

FROM : Chief of Station, Guatemala [] INFO: Chief, WHD

SUBJECT: GENERAL— Arms and Ammunition

SPECIFIC— Guillermo ~~X~~ GRIFFEL

Reference: GUAT 202

Attached for Lincoln and Headquarters is one copy of a memorandum prepared by Mr. Harold E. Urist, Public Affairs Officer, containing additional information on subject and dated 29 April 1954.

[]
Clara M. Heagey

Enclosure:
Memo as noted

30 April 1954

CMH/cmh

Distribution:

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2-Wash w/att
1-Files w/att

5 MAY 1954

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Mr. Krieg

April 29, 1954

Harold E. Urist

GUILLERMO GRIFFEL

Since there has been a reference in incoming correspondence to a Sr. Guillermo GRIFFEL, I hereby submit a memorandum reporting everything I know about the individual.

I met Sr. Griffel in December 1951 when we were fellow-passengers on a flight to New York. He was on a business trip and was attempting to buy some metal piping. I learned that he had come to Guatemala from Austria when he was a young man and had been in Guatemala ever since, having become a naturalized citizen. He told me that he was a partner in the A. Zadik Company, that he went to the Petén each chicle-collecting season to supervise a chicle operation there, and that he was a bachelor. He was extremely friendly and attentive, and I could not help but feel that my connection with the Embassy had something to do with his attitude. By coincidence, we returned from New York on the same plane and became further acquainted, particularly since we had to spend a night in Miami before we could make connections with the plane for Guatemala. I do not recall learning anything further about him at that time. I did notice that he was unusually woman-conscious to the extent of being boyishly exuberant despite his forty-odd years.

Upon our return to Guatemala he called at the Embassy, and I invited him to dinner at my home. He asked if he could bring a friend and came to our home with an extremely beautiful and intelligent young Costa Rican woman. Since Sr. Griffel could not be considered attractive by most standards and is afflicted by an extreme stammer, the beauty of his companion was all the more striking. We learned that she was on a "visit" from Costa Rica, but it was never quite clear whom she was visiting or where she was staying. I learned later that she was at one of Sr. Griffel's fincas, apparently living with him.

Sometime later Sr. Griffel invited my wife and me to one of his fincas which is located northeast of Guatemala City. During the course of that day he told us that before President Arbenz had taken office both he and the then President AREVALO had visited him at the finca. While he mentioned that he had acted as a

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purchasing agent for the Guatemalan Government, his intimate connection with both the present and past chiefs of Guatemala seemed hardly justified on the basis of such a business relationship. I subsequently learned that Sr. Griffel had for some time acted as procurer for ex-President Arévalo and now, possibly, for President Arbenz.

Sr. Griffel stopped in to visit me periodically, particularly when he had to go to the Consulate for a visa, and I was aware that he was making frequent trips to purchase government merchandise. He was always non-committal about the details of his business or about the Government, although he kept on seeking the friendship of both my wife and me. We continually avoided the relationship because of his unpleasant personality and because we distrusted him.

Few people with whom I had spoken knew much about Sr. Griffel, since he apparently kept pretty much in the background. The only place he seemed to be active was within the Jewish community, where I believe he acted as secretary of its principal social organization, possibly connected with the local synagogue.

When the Guatemalan Government opened bids for road machinery to be used on the Highway to the Atlantic, Sr. Griffel was one of the successful bidders (in the name of A. Zadik Company) and was mentioned briefly in a local press item, which questioned the validity of the bid. His name was quite garbled, another indication of the relative obscurity he has maintained and continues to maintain in Guatemalan affairs.

When I first met Sr. Griffel, he told me he had an aged father living in New York City whom he visited each time he travelled to that area. I believe he mentioned a married sister also living in New York City.

Sr. Griffel is extremely meticulous about his personal appearance (manicured and polished nails), is always lightly perfumed and smartly dressed. He is a teetotaler, but smokes cigarettes. He usually wears a homburg.

HEUrist:rs/fpb